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What Will the Lords Do?

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WHAT WILL THE LORDS DO?

Non tumultus—non quies; sed quale magni metus, et magnæ iræ, silentium est.

LONDON:

JAMES RIDGWAY, 169, PICCADILLY.

M.DCCC.XXXI.

Tilling, Printer, Chelsea.

TO THE

PEERS OF ENGLAND.

MY LORDS,

I venture to address to your Lordships the following speculations, on the probable consequences of your Lordships' Votes on the approaching Question of Reform. A few minutes' consideration of the future, may not be unprofitable, even to the most zealous—the most heedless of Anti-Reformers. It is useful to hear both sides of a question; and I will not pay so ill a compliment to the judgment and integrity of your Lordships, as to believe you wilfully deaf to discussion.

I have the honour to be,

My Lords, &c. &c.

Which will they do? Let us examine.

The House of Lords is composed chiefly of men of a certain age, who have led an easy inactive life; of men of large hereditary possessions, and high undisputed hereditary rank; of men who have been placed at what is termed the head of their families; and who, having married early, have generally large families, and domestic habits. Such men, having met with few sturdy obstacles in their course, are prone, on the one hand, to an exaggerated confidence in their own powers, and, on the other, liable to a decreasing resolution, as they meet with an increasing and enduring opposition. Such men, too, enjoying the rich bounties conferred on them by the law of the land, are likely to attach a peculiar importance to legal rights, and prescriptive usages, and to view, with a strong and natural antipathy, any line of Reform that questions ancient privileges. The centres, also, of small circles; these dispensers of patronage and favour, are liable to become men of flattered vanity; impatient of contradiction; fond of power; practisers and enforcers of obedience; men of small enterprize; averse from exhibition; prompt to command; willing to enforce, but slow and lax to execute.

Such seem to be the general characteristics

of the Lords. They are qualities which may easily commit them to the strife, but will not assuredly carry them through the long and arduous struggle they may provoke.

In social life, as Landlords, Magistrates, and Lieutenants, they are generally respected and praised. Those who are within the sphere of their acquaintance consider themselves honoured by their notice, and those who are their dependants, are often proud of the connexion; but yet how small are the diverging ripples of this influence in comparison to the vast ocean of British society. In a few remote districts, the large territorial Peer may have some weight; but, in the living *foci* of our towns, marts, and ports, he is as nothing. The wide and compact chain of middle life runs its circle through the shipping, banking, manufacturing, mining, trading ranks, with scarce a connecting, much less an influential link between itself and the Peerage. In the Army and the Navy, the Church, and the higher Law, the influence of the Lords is considerable; but the two first of these professions have happily small political weight; the third is at this moment in a state to require rather than to afford aid; and the stirring talent of the poorer followers of the Law, is more than a match for the well patronized, and well paid occupants of the higher Seats.

Thus, then, it seems, that the Peers, in their private capacities, act with a short lever on the mighty mass of British opinion ; and, we might be tempted to say, that, if they are weak as individuals, they cannot be strong as a body. But this assumption might not be true ; for there is a venerable dignity, a calm glory, an acknowledged benefit, a conservative principle in the constitution of the third, or noble estate of the realm, which is distinct from the merits and influence of the Peers themselves;—*it is the value of a Peerage in a limited monarchy.* I shall not stay to discuss this value, but proceed at once to assume it as acknowledged and cherished.

Our Peers, then, have this solid basis for their authority, the acknowledged necessity of their existence as a distinct body under our form of government. This is their security—their constant power; and to this may be added, the varying accessories of individual influence, arising from large possessions, high name, great exploits, and commanding talents, together with the other still more valuable and available force, springing from the collective acts and sentiments of their order, being in accordance with the spirit of the age in which they live.

But firm as is the above stated basis for

their authority, yet the Peers must be told, and with no unfriendly feeling, that this acknowledged necessity for a third estate is general and not particular: it pleads as much for a House of Senators as for a House of Lords. Therefore, in these critical times, our Peers must look to their own peculiar safeguards, and these are their *individual and collective popularity*.

Now, as individuals, I speak of course generally; they are, I believe, as worthy of esteem as they have been at any period of our history; but while this measure of esteem is granted to be not less, it cannot be denied that the illusion, the reverential deference with which the person and dignity of a Peer have hitherto been regarded, is considerably abated. I do not mention this as an evil, I state it as a well known fact. But there is a lamentable attendant evil, which is, that while this conventional veil has been removed, by the increased and more general intelligence and independence of the people, the Peers, themselves, have been slow to use a like diligence. In the dark ages their forefathers placed themselves in the front of war, and nobly won their coronets; but alas! in our days, in the glorious march of intellect, the descendants or substitutes of these indefatigable warriors have supinely lagged be-

hind. Others have occupied the post of honour, where, when the halo of adventitious respect had been dispelled, our Peers should have been found circled with the brighter and more enduring rays of superior industry, liberality, attainments, wisdom, and virtue. The scaffolding has been removed, and the temple found incomplete. There have been, and are many bright exceptions; men of grateful dispositions and philosophic minds, who, in the midst of every means of indulgence, have, with a wise industry, lived as if they believed that the tenure by which they held their proud stations in the world, was the attainment and diffusion of knowledge, the promotion of happiness, and the guardianship of the people; men, who considered that the law which constituted them hereditary legislators, called upon them, under an awful responsibility, carefully to qualify themselves for their high and arduous functions. But such exceptions render more glaring the general rule of those who seem to think pleasure and amusement the sole fit object of their lives, and that industry would derogate from their nobility.

This lagging behind the intellect of the day, has alienated much of the affections and respect of a large portion of the commu-

nity, while the place-hunting propensities of some noble families, who have addicted themselves to politics, have fearfully detracted from a belief in public honour and patriotism. Now, while such has been the conduct of individual Peers, the enactments of their collective wisdom have not been of a nature to call forth love and honour. The Lords have sedulously obeyed every Minister, and harshly adopted every coercive act of each successive Cabinet. No one liberal, reforming, popular measure, has originated in their House; many, of such a nature which the Commons have sent up, have been by them rejected or defeated, while they have carefully abstained from exercising this their restrictive privilege, by softening the rigour, abating the extravagance, or enlarging the policy of any one of those unpopular acts in which the Commons have too frequently indulged. Once, and once only, did the Peers give way, and wisely; for they retrieved, as far as in them lay, the evils of their previous opposition, regained credit with all good men, and saved Ireland from a convulsion. May they now, when the question at issue is the peace of the whole Empire, go and do likewise. Still this one wise act of grace is a solitary exception to their favourite pursuit of a restrictive policy, which, however irritating, has hitherto proved not the less vain; for the

people have gained ground, and the Peers now witness the consequences of a thwarting opposition, coupled with niggard and reluctant concession. They see, on the part of the people, an appetite for reforms, heightened by delay; and they acknowledge, while they complain of a daily decay of respect towards themselves as individuals, and of their public influence as a body.

But their individual and collective popularity form, as I have shewn, their peculiar safeguards in the hour of danger. And now, with these their fortresses of defence, thus found crumbling and dilapidated, with scarce an ally, certainly not an efficient ally, how is this declining order of men, who, by their habits of life, and tenure of property, are peculiarly unfitted for an arduous struggle—how are they to bear themselves successfully through the coming conflict? Will they, in vain, be called to a sense of their danger? Will they not hear both sides? Will they listen to those only who flatter or agree with them? Do they remember that instructive passage, concerning him who choose—

> Sui gaudere theatri;
> Nec reparare novas vires, multumque priori
> Credere fortunæ; stat magni nominis umbra.
> Qualis frugifero quercus sublimis in agro

Exuvias veteres populi, sacrataque gestans
Dona ducum : nec jam validis radicibus hœrens,
Pondere fixa sua est : nudosque per aëra ramos
Effundens, trunco, non frondibus efficit umbram.

Thus far then I have taken a hasty and general view of the forces and position of the British Peerage at the present critical moment. I have shewn, I believe truly, and certainly with no hostile sentiment, that it is in a state of great incidental weakness. I say incidental; for it is in itself, I trust, essentially strong, and would it shake off its present cholera of unpopularity—would it place itself at the head of the intellect and liberality, *true* liberality of the country, it would shine forth as the sun, honoured, bright, and beneficent. If Noble Lords should hold me to be mistaken in this calculation of their strength, let them, I pray, for the sake of themselves, and the mighty interests involved in their preservation, carefully calculate, and, as wise men, underrate, rather than exaggerate, their means of attack and defence. I will not stop to ask them against whom they are thus to marshal their forces, but proceed at once to examine the nature of the contest, if contest they will have.

At the very onset I am prepared to grant the general, though partially concealed hatred, of a vast majority of the House of Lords to the present Reform Bill, indeed to all Parliamentary Reform. The practices to which it tends to put an end have been precisely those illegal means by which the Peers have endeavoured to supply that hold on the State, which they have loosened, by their unpopular acts as a body, and their lack of industry, and attainments as individuals. And yet, in truth, not a small portion of this loss of real power is attributable to the practice of these very means, and the false confidence it has inspired. But I fear it would be time thrown away, to attempt persuading the Anti-Reformers to receive this truth. And yet, why will they not perceive, that a small junto of Boroughmongers, and their adherents, who have been long usurping the patronage of the State to the palpable detriment of the Peerage at large, are now seeking to cover their own sordid and selfish opposition, by an alliance with the more disinterested of the Tories, and most timid of the Whigs. Why will not those Peers, whose sole share of the Boroughmongering system has been a full portion of its obloquy? Why will they not perceive, that they are about to be made the tools of a cunning and selfish faction? Why

will they sully the purity of their own ermine, by asserting, that it is best defended by the corruption of a brother Peer's rotten Borough. Strange perversity! One might smile at the short-sighted dexterity of the Boroughmongers, so wise in their generation, did one not foresee the fatal consequences that may result from the success of their cajoleries.

But are we then to expect, that the Peers, deficient both in energy and power, will madly place themselves in the breach, and bid defiance to the present current of royal and popular opinion? No; this would be an act of devotion, worthy only of the Hindoos, and their Juggernaut. I cannot believe, that a body of staid, sober, wealthy, elderly Gentlemen, fathers too of large and affectionate families, should, for the sake of an opinion, meditate a proceeding, so nearly approaching to a political *felo-de-se*. And I am the more inclined to this charitable opinion of their discretion, when I see, that their object, if their object be to defeat the Bill, can be as effectually gained by side winds, and flank movements, as by direct opposition. Half measures will here, for once, be as effectual as whole; and, from their nature, are peculiarly fitted for the affections and exigencies of weak bodies. To these then, I fear, they will have recourse;

willingly, would I believe, that they would, with a manly courage, and patriotic candour, accede to the honest demands of their countrymen; that they would, magnanimously, place themselves within the circle of the interests and the affections of their native land. But, I much fear, that without a struggle, they will not do so; and I more fear, that, after a struggle, it will no longer be in their power to do so.

I now proceed to trace the melancholy lines of the struggle; happy shall I be, if any feature of the outline catch the eye, and arrest the vote of any Noble Lord. If a doubt should arise in his mind, surely, as a man, and as a Christian, he will lean to the side of concession and peace; he will remember *who resisteth the proud;* he will weigh *immediate* perils in nicer scales than *remote* evils; he will ward off, as far as he may, present danger, and leave the future to time, and God's good providence. Let him read of these impending evils, and consider, while he reads, that his may be the vote that may let loose or enchain them for ever. Let him pause, while there is yet time. He is on the Rubicon—even beyond the Rubicon; and, after victory, and seas of blood, there came the Ides of March. But here, I would more especially address one

Bench of their Lordship's House. I would ask the chiefs of that religion, whose essence is peace, charity, and good will towards man, what, if they should be found arrayed in support of a rule by corruption, founded on a distrust of the people, would people think, what would they say? Certainly, they would not blasphemously impute such scandal to the purest, the meekest of faiths: therefore, most assuredly, would they lay it at the feet of its professors. So, if the Bishops desire a Radical Reform in the Church, they can adopt no method more effectual, for the accomplishment of their object, than upholding the perjuries, the drunkenness, and corruption of elections. They may thus collect, conduct, and point against themselves the dark electric cloud, that now lowers over the country. Surely, they will not so flatly contradict their faith.

But I am lingering on the threshold;—no more. I pass over the consequences of positive rejection; because, though they might be more sudden, and severe in their operation, they would not be different in their nature. I assume, then, that we shall hear of motions for adjournment till after Christmas, and for various essential modifications and perversions of the Bill. There will be no doubt as to the covert intent of such proceedings, however

much disguised by outward protestations. They will be received and met by the country, and the Ministers, as direct attacks on the Bill itself. The day of trial will come. The speeches will have been made, the votes given. Who have it? The Ayes; joy, reconciliation, peace. The Noes? A dead silence! At that moment some Peer may wish he had voted otherwise; but, too late, the struggle has begun, the first blow has been struck.

Lord Grey, (and in his name I include the whole Cabinet,) must resign, or acquiesce.

He resigns. Who will take his place? Will you, my Lords Mansfield, and Winchilsea? Will Sir Robert Peel? Will the Duke of Wellington? Will my Lord Londonderry, or His Highness of Cumberland? Who will be the British Polignac?

He must be a bold man; for with a small declared majority in the weakest fraction of the State, whose construction is essentially defensive, he must be prepared for a contest with the offensive vigour and growing energies of the Commons, fresh from their elections; he must be prepared to find them backed by the angry enthusiasm of the people, supported by the mighty echos of the press, and sanctioned by the approval of the most po-

pular Monarch that has ever been seated on the English throne.

He must be a disloyal man; for he must contemplate approaching that Royal Ear with suggestions for a cowardly falsehood, in the shape of an Anti-Reform message to Parliament.

He must be a blind and prejudiced man; for he must fancy, that, by dissolving the present House of Commons, he shall be able to obtain one of a less reforming disposition; as if the desire of a people, just baffled at the moment of gratification, should be more quiescent under such disappointment, than when checked, as it was in the spring, at its outset.

He must be a rash man, and a bad man; for he must be willing to commit the coronets of the Peers, and the peace of the nation, to the dangerous re-action of a second and third dissolution.

Where then shall be found this bold, bad, blind, rash, prejudiced, disloyal person? No where, I trust; and, least of all, in the House of Lords.

And yet, if the Bill be thrown out, and Lord Grey resign, some one must take his place; and the first act of this *great unknown* must be a dissolution; for he, and his colleagues, could not possibly carry on the government for an hour

with the present House of Commons. This is apparent to every one; and yet the chances of gaining an Anti-Reform majority in a new House, are infinitely small. I should say impossible; for that man must think lightly of his countrymen, who can imagine, that partial resistance from the Lords should frighten the electors of Great Britain from their consistency, should make them eat their own words, should make them desert their representatives, for having fulfilled those very pledges, which they themselves, not six months ago, drew from them on their hustings. The thing is impossible; but as the Tories have already shewn themselves blind to public opinion, I will suppose it possible for them to make the attempt, and to succeed in making the constituency of this country traitors to themselves, and to their chosen advocates. In short, for argument's sake, I will suppose, for a moment, that they have gained a majority in their new House—what would be the result?—The defeat of the Reform Bill, such as it now is, but not of Reform itself; for they themselves have confessed the necessity of conceding some measure of modified Reform,* which shall

* Do I hear aright, "necessity of conceding?" Yes, they reply, on account of the excitement of the people. Indeed! then this grand question of concession dwindles, after all, into one of degree.

satisfy the returning good sense of the people of England, when the present delusion will vanish, and an effectual bar be placed to all present and future innovations. All this is very smooth; but I contend, that by granting a Reform, less extensive than that which the people have been now led to expect, that the seeds of discontent will be sown, and a wide field opened to demagogues and agitators, rendered daring by the countenance they will receive from some few of the many Reformers now in the House, who, most assuredly, will find their way into the next, purified though it be. Thus then their dear bought modified Reform will become the stepping stone for a series of other and more sweeping Reforms; and we shall have a bit-by-bit Reform with a vengeance. This I assert—this they deny—we are at issue: they may be right, and I may be wrong; but they cannot deny that there are grounds for questioning the final dispositions of this child of their old age, a modified Reform Bill. Thus, then, their greatest benefit—that for which they would risk the long odds of another dissolution, comes clogged with fears, and doubts, and suspicions; while, on the other hand, the consequences of a dissolution that should not correspond to their expectation, are clear enough. The spirit of the people would have been inflamed to intensity by a second contest, and a

second victory; and then, perhaps, when the error of their calculation was become imminent, and evident even to themselves, they would come forward and talk of adopting the first, the original Bill. The Bill, the whole Bill, would be their cry. I have no doubt it would. And why?—Because, forsooth, the people would, in the mean time, thanks to an irritating opposition, have risen largely in their demands. So should we have another, and another contest; and thus it is that these coy politicians act in times of excitement, as blisters on the public mind, and with notions the most adverse to revolution, they are, in practice, its most active exciters. Their coyness leads straight to the Penitentiary.

But I verily believe, many of the Anti-Reformers have no stomach for a second dissolution; the first satisfied them; they must be gluttons, if it did not. No; they calculate on Lord Grey's nerves; they fancy that he fears to approach the crisis, for which his resignation would be the signal. They mistake their man. But before we proceed, I would ask them, is there no mean between the extremes of resignation and acquiescence? May they not compel Lord Grey to create, even for their own preservation, some forty or fifty Peers? I verily believe, under all circum-

stances, it would be the wisest measure to which he could resort; he would have the excuse of being driven to it, and would adopt it with ulterior views. Meanwhile, the voice of the country would support him, and he would secure a large and permanent majority in a House, where he must expect nearly as many secret as declared opponents. But the Bill, once passed, the people would remember their refractory Lords; and the more so, as complaints would resound from all quarters, but chiefly from the Peers themselves, and most of all from the youngest creations; from the Londonderry's, the Ellenborough's, the Wynford's, should we hear protestations against the overgrown state of the Peerage, and the late stretch of prerogative. Then would the question, now quietly flowing in the under currents of opinion, gradually rise to the surface; and we should hear it asked, why the Peerage of England should not be assimilated to that of Scotland, and Ireland? And Lord Grey himself, quoting, as precedents, the disfranchisement of Peers that attended the Union of these kingdoms with England, might boldly declare, that an elective Peerage, from an hereditary Nobility, was in accordance with the Constitution; that it would remove the evils of an overgrown House; would set free

the Irish and Scotch Lords, now daily intriguing for the more permanent value of an English coronet; while, at the same time, it would efface the legitimate absurdity of an heaven-born race of hereditary Solons; thus consolidating, and replacing, within the circle of modern conformity, the antiquated, though venerable temple of the English Peerage. A refractory House of Lords, by rejecting all Reform in the Commons, might, in this way, draw down upon themselves a Reform they little contemplated.

But the fountain of honour is in the throne of the country; and it may well be a consideration with Lord Grey, and with that illustrious and patriotic Prince, who is at once the ornament and the safeguard of his Crown, how far, in these days, it may be expedient to have recourse to this undoubted exercise of the prerogative; and still more, how far it might be prudent to usher the black rod of Reform within the bar of the House of Lords, so soon after its exercise in the Commons.

But whatever may be the advice Lord Grey may think it his duty to give the Crown on this subject, the Tory Lords may rest assured, that no manouyres of theirs will ever win him to a compromise of his word: he is pledged to the Bill; and, such as it is, he will carry it,

either in the present House of Lords, or an enlarged House of Lords, or he will resign. Even were it contrary to his interest, his own high mind would bind him to such a line of conduct. But he knows full well, that were he, with a white heart, to waver now, that he would be lost. He, and his party, are committed in an arduous struggle; they lead, but do not command public opinion; and were they to submit to an important modification of the Bill, or to an adjournment, the real object of which would be obvious, even to the blindest mole, they would be driven from the helm; public opinion, like a mighty river, would press onwards in its course, bearing others more adventurous on its bosom, while it left them hapless wrecks on its shores.

They would be driven from their seats by an indignant House of Commons. A second dissolution would be a royal mandate for revolution. The present House of Commons would—must remain. Of this House, 379 of its Members have, by their vote, pledged themselves to the Bill; and would these Gentlemen recede from their pledges at the command of a Ministry who had broken their words, deserted their King, and bowed down before a slender majority of Lords? If they did, they would be the worst enemies of their country—

they would compel the people to shake off their present most praiseworthy patience; and the sages, who mistake, or pretend to mistake this patience for indifference, would hear them with a voice of thunder, with the shout of a nation,—but no; let us not contemplate such frightful possibilities.

Lord Grey would be compelled to resign. His place would be occupied by men more adventurous—possibly, less conscientious; a fatal impulse would have been given to the spirit of the people; they would have been called upon, during the change of Ministry, for a display of their strength; they would have shewn it; and having tasted the dangerous sweets of its exhibition, they would be tempted to continue its support to their new Members, who would come into office pledged to more vigorous measures, or, at least, a more vigorous enforcement of them. And against whom? Against the order that had rejected their Bill—against the House of Lords!

Here, then, should we have the people led on by one part of the State against another. Frightful consequence of ill-timed obstinacy! Fresh and fresh force would rapidly be acquired by the stream of public opinion; which, running on with self-accelerating velocity, would soon outstrip the reforming speed of its new

rulers; who would, ere long, be cast aside for others and others, more and more rash, whom the stream, now become a torrent, should cast up from its foul beds in the hurrying eddies of its rapids. We will not follow this St. Lawrence to its Niagara; the course is fatally sure.

Popular opinion, once allowed to take the lead, soon runs riot; it appoints its own rulers; it dictates to them; it deposes them; and nothing but great temperance, and mutual forbearance, and final union on the part of the early and more moderate parties, can check its destructive career. If that bugbear of our childhood, the French Revolution, must always be cited, let us refer to it, as an example to warn us from those errors of the leading parties in its early scenes, who suffered hatred and jealousy of one another; the narrow spirit of party, and the cursed love of self and self-opinion, to blind them to the consequences of disunion. By splitting into sub-divisions, they exposed themselves to be successively beat in detail by that fatal series of men, who added each their tribute of destruction to the institutions of their country; while they, themselves, were, in fact, not the rulers, but the passive representatives of each transitory grade of public opinion, in the descending scale of national disorganization;

it reached its apogee in the reign of terror, and was succeeded, as usual, by a tyranny.

This is an example not to fright us from Reform, but to teach us, that when a great question has been actively and publicly debated, and been as publicly accepted by a vast majority of those masses, in which essentially resides the force of a nation, that it is tempting fate, contemning example, and courting revolution to oppose the *speedy, final, and full* settlement of the matter at issue. The longer the delay, the greater the price of the Sybilline books. Those, therefore, who most hate revolution, should, in proportion to that hatred, now cling to this Bill, and nothing but this Bill: they ought to prefer it even to a modification, not from any fondness for the Bill, but from a love of order and fixedness of purpose; from a wise determination to prevent further discussion out of doors; and still more, to prevent the habit of such discussion from without, operating too strongly on the decisions within. These are considerations, particularly addressed to those who profess conservative principles; and they are called upon, in proof of their sincerity, to act up to their professions. They confess, that the hour for defeating Parliamentary Reform, in the abstract, is gone by; nay, they go farther, and profess a desire for

some Reform—a moderate Reform. Then, in this case, also, as in the case of concession, it is a question only of degree. They consent to the substance, but demur to the quantity. Then will they, upon a mere question of this or that Bill of Reform, supposing they could carry theirs, and still more, that it would be final—Will they, for comparatively so trifling a difference, hazard the long train of endless, unknown, perhaps, even unthought of innovations, that may follow their resistance? Why will they play so dangerous a game? Why hazard such unequal stakes?

Is their private hatred of the present Ministers, who have superseded them, so bitter, that without a hope of occupying their benches, they are yet, with a reckless vengeance, bent on their overthrow? And, wherefore, in the name of common honesty and patriotism; even for the sake, at least, so events would prove, of placing men of infinitely more reforming and democratic principles in their seats, of men diametrically opposed to themselves. Let the Lords then pause, and seriously consider, that with them is the power—no, not of stifling the young Hercules of Reform, but of adding to his club a tremendous category, a whole twelve labours of Reform. Let them look around, and see who are marshalled at their side—the Mem-

ber for Preston! Vultures smell the field of battle from afar. No, no, let them hate Lord Grey, and Lord Brougham, and their party, as cordially as they choose; but let them rally round them for the present; for with them, fortunately, or unfortunately, it matters not to the patriot in the hour of danger; but with them are the colours of the country, the standard of order. They may be the last hinge of the last door; and will the Lords, with a childish waywardness, break down the one remaining barrier? Past events may be regretted, but they cannot be changed; and those who mourn over their effects will not strongly evince the purity of their hatred of all excitement, by pursuing measures tending directly to increase it. It may be an unpleasant dilemma to which they are reduced; it may be irritating to their feelings, but it is not the less incumbent on their wisdom and patriotism to support Lord Grey in his seat. It is impossible to point out the quantum of support—*this* must depend upon circumstances; but as they value conservative principles, they must take good care that it be sufficient to prevent, for the present, public feeling being again excited by a change of Ministry, much more by a dissolution of Parliament. I defy them to point out any other rational line of conduct, for those who wish to

preserve order, be they high or low Tories, Whigs, or Radicals. Need they be reminded of the result of those court intrigues, and that conservative hatred, which, at length, succeeded in driving Necker, the French Lord Grey, from the Ministry. Will they profit by the example? I trust they may.

To bring the question within a narrower compass; let us say, if Lord Grey's Administration be an evil in their sight—if the formation of a Tory Ministry be impracticable, and the prospect of a Radical Cabinet an abomination—then must they not, as wise and good men, choose the lesser evil? They must: and, hereafter, when, by the fulfilment of the pledges given and required, the present ferment shall have subsided, the House of Lords may reap their reward in recovered popularity with the people, and more stable power in Parliament. Surely, such qualified support of a Ministry, in times like these, is perfectly distinct from any particular or general approval of their measures. By and by, let the Tories throw them out, if they will—if they can; but let it be on some general question, when they may find adherents in the great body of the nation; but let the Lords beware, (I say it in all sincerity,) let them beware of a trial of strength on a question

so narrow, so dangerous, so invidious to themselves, as the retention of their own rotten Boroughs. If they must and will fight, let them contend for their own noble constitutional rights, and not for sordid abuses, the very practice of which, the law calls a high misdemeanour.

One more view of the question, and I have done. We have, hitherto, regarded the effect a rejection of the Bill would have upon the Ministers, on Parliament, and through Parliament on the people, upon what may be termed the legitimate and constitutional result of a rejection by the Lords. Let us now take a hasty glimpse of what might be its direct and immediate effect upon the people, upon what may be termed its unconstitutional and revolutionary effect. Let us see.

The Bill is sent up to the Lords—it is rejected; for important modifications, or long adjournments of debate, will be considered by the people as tantamount to rejection.

It is rejected! I envy not the nightmare dreams, or the stolid sleep of each Noble Lord of that fatal Majority that shall throw out the Bill.

It is rejected! The evil report will rapidly spread its dark wings from one end of the Isle

to the other. It will cross over to Ireland. The black banner will carry the heavy tidings from Glasgow, to the uttermost Highlands.

It is rejected! Will the people of England sit patiently down? Will they hang up their harps on the willows of despair, till it is their Lord's good pleasure that the people's representatives should be the representatives of the people? I think not. Then, what will they do? Will they carry their favourite Bill, their Bill of Rights, by force of arms? No—the days of brute force are gone to sleep with the nights of ignorance; there are measures more consonant to the present times. Association, unanimity of design, resistance within legal bounds,—these the people will employ, and with, as one voice, they will say, "The present House of Lords will not pass our Bill; but our Bill must be passed—our Commons desire it—our King sanctions it; and we are pledged to it. Another House of Lords—another third estate must be found, who will pass our Bill." Thus, and more dangerously may they reason. Noble Lords may start—may frown—may imprecate—may threaten; but the energies of this mighty empire are not to be put down by a sneer, or a vote; they may suddenly spring up, as in a night, and scatter their opponents, as mists from before the face of the morning. The people may ask, can there be

men with intellects so dull, so inobservant, and so inexperienced, who, though born, and bred, and living in the light of this century, can yet see only with the twilight perception of the dark ages? men, whose notions of revolutions are formed from the traditions of days, when the art of reading and writing was a distinction, a printing press a curiosity, and a journey from York to London an epoch in life? Are there men, who, with the recent experience of the last twelve months, can read of Birmingham, and of Glasgow, and of a thousand and one other Unions—who can hear of the avidity with which the public papers are sought for in every corner of the kingdom, and who can witness the feverish excitement of the public mind, and yet, forsooth, loll upon their hereditary Seats, and fancy a frown from a weak majority of the weakest portion of the State, can frighten the great mass of their fellow-subjects from the pursuit of their legitimate desires? If there be such men, an excited people may add, they are no longer fit to be our legislators; the House of Lords must be adapted to the present stage of civilization. We will no longer———

But, no—I will not further pursue this revolutionary picture; it is an ungrateful subject, such as one would not willingly contemplate, much less exhibit to the public gaze. But it

imperatively behoves those Noble Lords who think of rejecting the Bill, to fill up this outline, and paint it with its brightest and most fearful colours—to finish it carefully—to look into its details—and then to place it opposite their own little vignette of a modified Reform;—the terrible Last Judgment of Michael Angelo, against the last lithographic print of the day. These are the two extremes; the chances for the possible attainment of the one, are not greater, than for the ruinous sequence of the other.

Is it, then, possible—is it conceivable, that a body of men should be so blind, as not to see the predicament in which they stand? Will they force us to believe, with the Roman—

Quos Deus vult perdere prius dementat.

Once more, let us resume, before we part. Let us confess, that the Lords are, by their private habits, and by the constitution of their order, unfitted for a long and arduous struggle.

That they are, at the present moment, in a state of unusual weakness; while the Commons, the King, and the people, enjoy an opposite degree of strength.

That this question of Parliamentary Reform, on which they seem inclined to stake the value of their own authority, is one of a nature peculiarly invidious for them to decide on.

That they, themselves, confess they cannot resist the measure in toto.

That, therefore, it is a question of only a difference of degree of Reform.

And, yet, that for the value of this difference, they are prepared to shake the stability of the Empire, in whole, or in part.

And, finally, that the evils which they dread are prospective, while those, we point out, are immediate.

In other words, that a weak order, in a state of unusual weakness, is willing, for the sake of a contingent danger, to contend, at a fearful present risk, against three strong orders in a state of unusual strength and concord; and to contend, too, on an invidious question, the essential principle of which they admit in the outset. Infatuation cannot go further.

This is a plain statement of the case; would, that I could make it plainer, and more acceptable.

Before I conclude, I must add, that if I have any where expressed myself too warmly, I have to crave pardon. It has been from no wish to offend, but from a desire to bring the subject strongly to view. I have forborn much that might have been said. I have passed over some topics lightly; for, as a well wisher to the Peers themselves, to my country, and to public order, I am content with the reformation of one branch

of our Legislature. I am no admirer of a Reform in the gross. I have read history with small profit, if I have not learnt that it is wise to realize; to make good one important step at a time; to watch the numberless unforeseen bearings which spring from a new position; to give time for excitement to subside; for roots to strike; for leaves to bud; for fruit to bear. For these reasons, I am most anxious, that the Lords should not force on a Reform of their own House, by resisting that of the Commons.

In conclusion, I affirm, that the Lords, to the disappointment of their enemies, *will pass the Bill.*

Tilling, Printer, Chelsea.

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